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ABSTRACT

In 1975, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges conducted a national survey of humanities faculty in two-year colleges. This paper summarizes the characteristics of literature instructors, the largest subgroup in the total sample of 1,493 full- and part-time faculty. Findings of the survey include: (1) slightly fewer (21%) than the total humanities population (25%) had been students in two-year colleges; (2) 56% were males as compared to 67% of the total sample; (3) 94% reported themselves to be white/Caucasian; (4) 89% held their highest degree in literature; (5) literature instructors felt that in five years' time they would find their present positions most desirable, ranking second a position in a four-year college or university; (6) literature instructors had spent more time as faculty members in two-year colleges than the total group; and (7) 23% had served as department/division chairpersons. Findings concerning attitudes toward students and the humanities, reference group identification, job satisfaction, and preference for further preparation are also reported. Literature instructors represented the largest percentage of the sampled population and in most cases their responses were consistent with the total. For the full survey report, see ED 121 358. (JDS)

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A PROFILE OF LITERATURE INSTRUCTORS IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

In a recent nationwide study conducted by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges under National Endowment for the Humanities sponsorship, literature instructors represented the largest subgroup within a random sample of 1493 humanities instructors in 156 two-year colleges. This study attempted to redress the imbalance between a plethora of material regarding general characteristics of college faculties and a paucity of data on instructors in specific disciplines. Data were revealed on such variables as attitudes toward students and the humanities, professional affiliations, weekly teaching hours, and full-time/part-time status for eleven disciplines--art, anthropology, foreign language, history, law/government, liberal arts/drama, literature, music, philosophy, religious studies, and social science. Slightly fewer (21%)* than the total humanities population (25%) had previously been students in two-year colleges. And slightly fewer than the total (56% as compared with 67%) are males--a percentage that comes closer, of course, to establishing equality between the sexes. In fact, next to foreign language, a greater percent of literature people are females than those in any other disciplinary group. Most (89%) of these instructors hold their major of highest degree in literature, with 14% having their highest degree in education. Almost all (94%)--and second only to people teaching art history--are white/Caucasian.

Experience

Slightly over 40% of the literature instructors had spent no time in secondary schools as either administrators or faculty members, while 55% had not been so involved in four-year colleges or universities beyond the level of teaching or research assistant. These figures are almost exactly comparable to those of the total population. However, more of the literature respondents had spent more time as faculty members in two-year colleges than the total group--41% accounting for 5-10 years, 20% for 11-20 years, and 18% for 3-4 years. Twenty-three percent had served as department or division chairpersons, 11% as directors of special programs, and 4% as administrators. For the chairpersons and administrators these figures represent a somewhat lower number with experience than the total sample of 1493, while for the special program director, slightly more than the total had been so engaged. Most (46%) claimed to have worked in their current institutions 5-10 years, while 19% reported 3-4 years and 18%, 11-20 years.

*All figures are rounded.

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Chairpersons and Doctorates

Of the group who claimed experience as division or department chairpersons, only 14% were acting in that capacity at the time they responded to the Faculty Survey. A little over half of this 14% had previously employed people with doctorates as instructors in their department or division, while 86* claimed no pressure either way to hire or not. Yet, while 65% say that in the future they plan to hire instructors with this advanced degree, 37% say they will hire the best person regardless of degree. Some (14%) claim that people with doctorates are more capable and knowledgeable whereas 12% suggest they are best qualified. Reasons for not hiring instructors with this high a degree follow closely the trend established by the total group: they command high salaries, this degree is not seen as necessary to teach in the department under question, these people typically do not have enough practical experience, and/or they are too specialized to meet the needs of the two-year college. At the same time, one-fourth of the literature people report their experience with doctorate holders has been that they are fine/excellent or good instructors, or that they perform the same as others (28%).

Hours and Full-Time/Part-Time Status

More (24%) literature people teach 10-12 hours a week than the total sample (17%), more (43%) than the total (32%) claim 13-15 hours; fewer attest to 16-18 hours (12% literature, 13% total) and more than 18 hours (4% literature, 8% total). At the lower levels, fewer are engaged in 4-6 hours or 7-9 hours teaching than the total sample. Thus it is not surprising that so many of the literature people are considered to be full-time instructors. In fact, the 88% so designating is the largest percent of any disciplinary group examined in this project. Similarly, then, it is not unexpected that literature has the fewest people (13%) who are employed in jobs in addition to their teaching position.

Reference Groups and Journals

Literature instructors are much like their peers in other disciplines in terms of whom they rank as useful sources of advice on teaching. In order of importance they designate colleagues first, then students, department chairpersons, professional journals, university professors, programs of professional organizations, and, tied for last, high school teachers and administrators.

We asked how many journals the faculty read and found that slightly more (27%) literature instructors than the total (26%) claim to subscribe to and read no scholarly journals within their field. However the liter-

ature instructors read proportionately more professional education journals.

Professional Development

When it comes to any disciplinary group indicating a desire to take steps toward professional development within the next five years, no surprises appear. While this question may not prove to be very reliable (since it may merely be easier for one to respond with a "yes" than a "no"), the types of steps indicated are of some interest. More literature (37%) people than the total (32%) indicate a desire to enroll in university courses, while 21% are currently working on their doctorates. Somewhat fewer (29%) than the total (34%) indicate a desire to obtain the Ph.D. or Ed.D., while the same percent (six) point to the Doctor of Arts degree. The latter finding is surprising since the Doctor of Arts in English has been one of the more popular D.A.T. programs throughout the country

When it comes to activities they would engage in during a free summer, literature people are consistent with the general group. Twenty-three percent report that during a free summer they would write for publication (14% of the total so indicate). Fifty-one percent of the literature instructors in our 156 colleges would select travel for a free summer; 44% choose doing research or engaging in workshops; and 38% opt for taking classes, studying and reading.

The type of training one would seek were he/she to begin all over again suggests degrees of satisfaction as well as some flexibility. About one-third of the literature people as well as the total group say they would do the same/change nothing in their previous experience. A fair number would study humanities, take more teaching methods courses, do more student teaching, and take more psychology/personal development courses.

Another measure of satisfaction which also indicates the degree to which respondents are able to look ahead in a realistic manner was determined by the question, "Five years from now (1980) you might be considering the following positions. How attractive do they appear to you at this time?" Seen as "very attractive," in order of preference, were "I would be doing what I'm doing now," "A faculty position at a four-year college or university," "A school outside the United States," "A faculty position at another community or junior college," "An administrative position in a community or junior college," "A non-teaching, non-academic position," "Any position but this college," "I have no idea," and last, "A position in a professional association."

Affiliations

Slightly fewer literature people (20%) than the total sample (23%)

claim no membership in professional organizations. Of those who are affiliated, 28% indicate two organizations; 25%, one; and 15%, three. About half the literature instructors had not attended a regional or national meeting in the past three years, 23% had attended one, and 14%, two. Papers were presented by very few (less than 10% of both the literature and total groups).

Other measures of affiliation are gleaned from an item assessing group cohesion. Interestingly--but perhaps not unexpected since literature people comprise the largest disciplinary group within our humanities population--both the literature and total sample rank all such reference groups exactly the same in terms of cohesion. In order from high to low affiliation are friends, family, other instructors in their field, most instructors at their school, students, teacher organizations, and college administrators.

Students

When asked about qualities that students should gain from a two-year college education, our literature sample ranked, in order, "Self-knowledge and a personal identity," "Knowledge of and interest in community and world problems," "Aesthetic awareness," "Knowledge and skills directly applicable to their careers," "Preparation for further formal education," and last, "An understanding and mastery of some academic discipline."

Accord between the literature people and total sample is found in regard to the number of courses they think should be required of students in two-year occupational programs. Most popular is six or more, then four, three, two, five, and tied, none and one.

Literature people in general view non-course related presentations available to students at the colleges as less sufficient than do the other respondents. By far, colloquiums are considered too few (by 78%), then concerts and recitals (too few--63%), lectures (too few--62%), exhibits (too few--61%), and films (too few--49%). Almost all groups feel that films are offered in sufficient quantity.

Experience and Curriculum

Of all the disciplinary groups saying they experience the humanities through visiting art museums, attending shows, exhibits, concerts, the theatre, and films, by far the largest numbers are found among the literature people, 72%. This sample is also the largest who point to reading as a way of experiencing the humanities other than through their teaching (60% literature, 50% total). They select listening to records and the radio and viewing TV, and assorted activities to lesser degrees.

Also more than any other disciplinary group (34% literature, 29% total) they indicate that in the past seven years humanities courses at their colleges have been added or improved. And more of them report they would like to see the addition and/or improvement of even more humanities courses at their colleges (34% literature, 30% total), integrated humanities into interdisciplinary courses (16% literature, 14% total), and extra curricular courses (16% literature, 11% total). Most of these people (17%) teach in schools with 5000-7499 students; next (15%), 2500-4999, and third (12%), 10,000-14,999.

In Sum

Because literature instructors represent the largest percentage of the sampled population, it is no wonder that in most cases the reactions to faculty survey items are quite consistent with the total. Accordingly, the few differences that do pertain are accentuated and of particular interest to people who would view humanities faculty in two-year colleges.

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